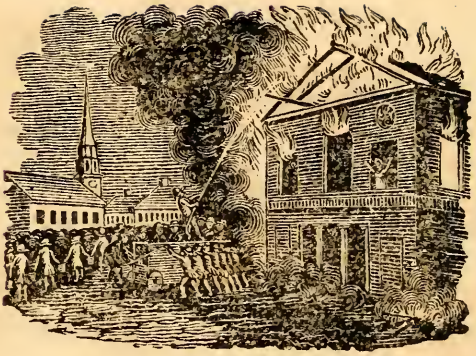
DAR
F234
R5C1



"*In the midst of Life, we are in death.*"

CALAMITY AT RICHMOND,

BEING

A NARRATIVE

Of the affecting circumstances attending the

AWFUL CONFLAGRATION OF THE THEATRE,

IN THE

CITY OF RICHMOND,

On the Night of Thursday, the 26th of December, 1811.

By which, more than *Seventy* of its valuable Citizens suddenly lost their lives, and many others were greatly injured and maimed.

COLLECTED

from various Letters, Publications, and Official Reports,

AND ACCOMPANIED WITH A

PREFACE,

Containing appropriate Reflections, calculated to awaken the attention of the public, to the *frequency* of the destruction of

THEATRICAL EDIFICES.

PHILADELPHIA,

Published and sold by John F. Watson, South-west corner of Third and Chesnut-streets.

1812.

(Price 25 cents.)

Har
F234
R5C1

PREFACE.

THE common events of Providence are, for the most part, by man, but little regarded. They present a stream, wide indeed, and majestic, but, moving with a current so silent, slow, and perpetually present, as to engage but a small portion of his attention. But sometimes the scene changes; the current is broken by awful rocks, or seen falling in tremendous cataracts. The observer ceases to be careless. He is shocked into serious meditation; and his memory becomes a treasury of solemn and instructive transaction.

Of the occurrences which have, of late, arrested and occupied the public mind, none has created a deeper interest than the fire at Richmond. The heart must be adamant, that does not beat with sympathy on viewing sufferings so extreme, and insensible to the monitions of Wisdom that does not collect some useful instruction from the catastrophe.

Whence, if not from such a calamity, shall we learn the instability of human condition? What are prospects the most enlivening to the eye of folly? what, but the sunshine of a moment? How strange a preface the loud laughter excited by a pantomime,

to volumes of smoke and fire. An oracle of wisdom said of laughter, "it is mad," and of mirth, "what doth it?" What in some periods of extreme peril, can human effort or strength avail? Embodied crouds reduce it to feebleness; and the voice of anguish, the emotions of sympathy, and internal agitation, distract its efforts. What could *pity*—what could parental or filial tenderness effect? The father is destined to see the victorious flames tower over his suffocated offspring—the child is left to cry out, "amid those heaps of burning bones, my father, my mother lies." The lover hears the last shriek of the idol he adored, and falls a sacrifice to death by her side. Ah! how little thought the fair one whose curls were adjusted—whose garments, costly and elegant, were disposed, so as to produce on the spectator, the most impressive effect, that those curls were, that same night, to be crisped with devouring flame; and those garments to be denied the service of a winding-sheet!

A life of humiliation and poverty is often dreaded and derided as a real ill. But if it secures not the honours and gratifications which wealth and talent enjoy, it escapes their snares and afflictions. Amid a thousand incentives to contentment with an humble lot, let it be remembered, that not six of the lower classes of society found death in the blazing theatre.

Let the friends of piety learn, that godliness is profitable for the life that now is. It cannot enjoy the mirth of the foolish; yet the self-denial it imposes, is among the most valuable preservatives from disease and untimely dissolution. If with relation to action, the good man has often to say,

"This did not I because of the fear of the Lord," with relation to suffering, he can frequently show, that grace divine is a shield to its possessor.

In a life transient as is the present, and on a journey to an invisible world of punishments and rewards, who would not wish ever to be found in a situation in which the approach of the "Great Teacher Death," should create no excessive surprize? Who would be willing to close the career of mortality in the very act of displeasing his Maker and his Judge! Who in a Theatre would be content to give up the ghost? Should the sable garments, the sighs, the tears of Richmond, awaken an inquiry into the propriety of supporting the stage, good will result from the evil. Let it not be said the Theatre *may* be rendered useful. The inquiry should be directed to what it *is* and has been, through all the ages of its establishment. Nazianzen among the fathers, Buchanan among the poets, and the excellent Hannah More, the fairest ornament of her sex, have successively endeavoured to supplant the vices of the Theatre, and to substitute amusements more chaste and sacred. But who that patronizes the comedian, desires such compositions as theirs? Is it *recreation* the lover of the playhouse requires? Let him seriously ask himself whether the diversion is not procured at too dear a price, which demands that property, which might have instructed the orphan and fed the poor—whether the agitation of the passions between tragic and comic scenes, comports with the good government of the mind, and with the calm of a useful and happy life. Let him ask if an unnecessary waste of time will not mark him with the character of an un-

profitable servant. Man has business before him of too serious a nature, to allow much time for idle amusement.

> Can laughter feed th' immortal mind?
> Were spirits of celestial kind
> Made for a jest—to sport and play,
> To wear out time, and waste the day?

If the stage gave lessons of virtue, vicious men would abhor it; but, where is the profligate who dreads censure in a theatre! Character on the stage is almost ever distorted. Virtue is exhibited too angelic for human imitation; and vice is so allied to virtue, as to appear like a younger sister, or so sunk in infamy, as to become hated as a demon, without permitting the suspicion that the monster is seated in the heart. Plays are generally, and some of them grossly impure. The vail, which, by a double meaning, or a substituted word, is sometimes employed to conceal an abominable sentiment, is almost ever too transparent, and it may be feared purposely made so, to answer the avowed design.

It would be easy to adduce the sentiments of many of the wisest heathen, and still more of divines, philosophers, and patriots, who bear a decided testimony against Theatrical exhibitions, but our limits forbid. A passage from Mr. Law must suffice: "Had any one the power of an apostle, or the tongue of an angel, it would be well employed in exposing or dissuading from those ways of life which wealth, corruption, and politeness, have brought among us. We indeed call them diversions, but they do the whole work of idolatry and infidelity; and fill people with so much blindness and hardness of heart, that they neither live by wis-

dom nor fell the want of it; but are content to play away their lives with scarce any attention to the approaching scenes of death and eternity."*

We are far from believing that the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were sinners above all others. And equally so from supposing that such as have perished in play-houses have been singularly notorious in crime. Many visit the Theatre without reflection. Some are captivated with its splendour, or with opportunities of seeing and being seen. Others,

> In spite of all that you can say
> Can see no *evil* in a play:

and it cannot be surprising that multitudes of unsuspecting youths should tread in the print of their fathers' steps. Man is a creature fallen and depraved. He loves "a downward road." "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not of the Father but of the world." Nothing that is greatly good, can in the present state of things, be greatly popular. The frequenter of the Theatre obeys the dictates of but a common depravity.

It may not, however, prove an unprofitable service, to remind the reader of the frequent visitations from God, similar to that under which Richmond is now groaning, which have befallen public Thea-

* If the reader would further inform himself upon the subject, let him consult Collyer on Stage Plays, and the writings and opinions of Pascall, the Prince of Conti, Cave, Usher, Tillotson, Sir M. Hale, William Penn, Rollin, Sir John Hawkins, Montague, Mr. Wilberforce, and many others.

tres. A correct catalogue is not contemplated. Sufficient documents are not possessed, nor is sufficient leisure allowed, before the issuing of the present publication, to complete one. The following, which is purposely limited to *modern* events, may be considered ample, and is believed to be authentic.

At the fire-works exhibited at Paris, in honour of the Dauphin's marriage, the passages being stopped up, occasioned such a crowd, that the people trampled upon one another till they lay in heaps. A scaffold erected over the river also broke down, and near 1000 persons lost their lives. April 21, 1770.

The playhouse at Amsterdam took fire, A. D. 1772; seven persons were suffocated and great numbers wounded in getting out. Since then a second fire has occurred, at which from 6 to 800 lives were lost.

The theatre at Saragossa, in Spain, was destroyed by fire A. D. 1772, and nearly all the audience perished.

The theatre of Venice was struck, during the representation, with a flash of lightning A. D. 1769, and several lost their lives.

The French opera, at the Palais Royal, was burnt at Paris, A. D. 1781, and multitudes perished.

The theatre at Montpelier was destroyed by fire, 1783, and five hundred lives were lost.

The theatre at Mentz was destroyed by fire during the play, A. D. 1786, on the falling in of which 70 were burned, and many crushed to death.

At Clermont Ferrard, in France, in December,

1791, the floor gave way, by which 56 were killed and 57 were badly wounded.

The theatre at Cape d'Istria, in Italy, fell A. D. 1794, and crushed the audience, and players to death.

The theatre at Altona, near Hamburg, was consumed by fire in 1807—8, and caused the loss of many lives.

The theatre in Berlin was burnt down in 1808.

In our country we have already witnessed the destruction of the theatre at Boston, and of Ricketts's Circus in Philadelphia.

LONDON,

Has been a seat of serious playhouse calamities.

The Opera House was burnt down A. D. 1789.

The Pantheon was burnt and destroyed to the value of 60,000 l, A. D. 1692.

Astley's Amphitheatre and 19 other buildings burnt, A. D. 1794.

Little theatre in Hay Market, 15 trodden to death, 1794.

The Royal Circus, Black Friar's, burnt 1805.

The cry of "*a fight!*" was mistaken for that of "*a fire!*" at Sadlers Wells; a universal alarm ensued, and many perished, A. D. 1807.

The Covent Garden Theatre, burnt A. D. 1808.

The theatre in Drury-lane has been twice consumed: first, A. D. 1671, and 60 other buildings; and afterwards in 1809. It was a structure 400

feet in length, and its erection cost 200,000 l. sterl. A reservoir was provided at its summit to supply artificial rivers, and afford an expedient in case of fire. So satisfied were the proprietors of its security, that on opening the theatre, the vain boast was uttered,

> Our pile is rock more durable than brass,
> Our decorations gossamer and gas;
> The very ravages of fire we scout,
> For we have here wherewith to put it out.
> In ample reservoirs our firm reliance,
> Whose streams set conflagration at defiance;
> Consume the scenes, your safety still is certain,
> Presto—for proof let down the iron curtain."

The public mind has been powerfully touched by the late calamity. The testimony of respect that has been paid by both houses of Congress to the memory of the dead, by ordaining that each of its members shall wear crape on his arm for a month, is a strong expression of popular feeling. Similar resolves have been formed, first, among the students from Virginia, now attending the medical lectures in the University of Pennsylvania, and who are said to consist of more than a hundred, and, since, by the young men generally in this great city. It reflects praise on the afflicted students, that they have requested a sermon suited to the melancholy occasion from the Rev. Dr. Alexander; and on the young men of Philadelphia, that they, with them, have determined to attend it. Happy, should it prove to them, the means of producing

the fear of God, and the beginning of heavenly wisdom.

Richmond, afflicted Richmond, has resolved, that for four months, dissipation in no shape shall be permitted to approach her. May she have grace to protract the period still farther and farther. She has resolved that the theatre shall be converted into a temple of God. May it be filled with the brightness of his presence; and as it has been the spot on which death has triumphed, become distinguished for the victories of Him, who is the resurrection and the life.

But who does not perceive in such resolutions, all proper and praiseworthy as they are, how little the Theatre and the Sanctuary agree with each other? Let none plead for the virtues of the tragic or the comic muses. The universal prevalence of piety will as really chase them from the land, as the diffusion of the Christian system banished from Rome and Greece their false divinities.

We are not unconscious that in the occurrences of time, the same event often happeneth unto the righteous and the wicked. The roof may fall in, or the floor give way, while men are engaged in the solemn worship of their maker: but what has the man to fear in prospect of eternity, who is devoting his soul to the honour and service of his God? He is every where, and ever safe; and safe too, as to the noblest part of his nature. "Though the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; though the earth, and the works that are therein, be burned up," "he stands on the ashes of a universe and exclaims, I have lost nothing."

In giving the particulars of the circumstances attending the awful conflagration, we have purposely restricted ourselves to the narratives which have been furnished the public, by the various eyewitnesses and official reporters. The utility of such a choice, will easily be made obvious. Observers and immediate sufferers write with a pathos and a sensibility of expression, so peculiar to themselves, as easiest engages the sensibility of the distant reader, in a manner which could neither be imitated by us, nor perhaps would be free from the charge of affectation, if attempted. For the same reason, nothing has been expunged, though many repeat the same events, because the language of passion more readily expresses the emotion of the mind. Even the *same* writers, are permitted to repeat the disaster; and thus we have a brief *diary* of the public anguish.

We have given the *names* of *seventy* persons who lost their lives by the conflagration, though it is highly probable from the quantity of discovered bones, that the number must have been still greater. None of the accounts furnishes us with any knowledge of the number who are yet likely to die of their wounds, or will in the injury of their limbs or persons, carry the evidence of their misfortune through life.

It is a remarkable fact, that though the catastrophe proved so fatal to the citizens of *Richmond*, there should not have been a solitary instance of the loss of a citizen of Manchester, though it lies so contiguous to Richmond as to be united by a bridge.

It is not less worthy of observation, that there hould have been so great a disproportion in the exes of the sufferers. Alas! how fatal to the sofer and weaker sex! Of the 70 lost, 50 were fenales! 46 of which were whites: only 18 were nen!

AWFUL CALAMITY

AT RICHMOND.

As narrated by the Editor of the AMERICAN STANDARD, *on Friday, the 27th December*, 1811.

LAST night the playhouse in this city was crowded with an unusual audience. There could not have been less than 600 persons in the house. Just before the conclusion of the play, the scenery caught fire, and in a few minutes the whole building was wrapt in flames. It is already ascertained that 61 persons were devoured by that most terrific element. The Editor of this paper was in the house when the ever-to-be-remembered, deplorable accident occurred. He is informed that the scenery took fire in the back part of the house, by raising of a chandelier; that the boy, who was ordered by some of the players to raise it, stated that if he did so, the scenery would take fire, when he was commanded in a peremptory manner, to hoist it. The boy obeyed, and the fire was instantly communicated to the scenery. He gave the alarm in the rear of the stage, and requested some of the attendants to cut the cords by which the combustible materials were suspended. The person, whose duty it was to perform this business, became panic struck, and sought his own safety. This unfortunately happened at a time when one of the performers was playing near the orchestra, and the greatest part of the stage, with its horrid danger, was obscured from the audience by a curtain.

The flames spread with almost the rapidity of lightning; and the fire falling from the ceiling upon the performer was the first notice which the people had of their danger. Even then, many supposed it to be a part of the play, and were for a little time restrained from flight by a cry from the stage that there was no danger. The performers and their attendants in vain endeavoured to tear down the scenery. The fire flashed in every part of the house with a rapidity, horrible and astonishing, and, alas! gushing tears and unspeakable anguish deprive me of utterance. No person, who was not present, can form any idea of this unexampled scene of human distress.—The Editor having none of his family with him, and being not far from the door, was among the first who escaped.

No words can express his horror, when on turning round, he discovered the whole building to be in flames. There was but one door for the greatest part of the audience to pass. Men, women, and children were pressing upon each other, while the flames were seizing upon those behind. The Editor went to the different windows, which were very high, and implored his fellow-creatures to save their lives by jumping out of them. Those nearest the windows, ignorant of their danger, were afraid to leap down, whilst those behind them, were seen catching on fire, and writhing in the greatest agonies of pain and distress. At length, those behind, urged by the pressing flames, pushed those who were nearest to the windows, and people of every description begun to fall, one upon another, some with their clothes on fire, some half roasted: Oh wretched me! Oh afflicted people!—Would to God I could have died a thousand deaths in any shape, could individual suffering have purchased the safety of my friends, my benefactors, of those whom I loved.**** The Editor with the assistance of others, caught several of those whom he had begged to leap from the windows. One lady jumped out when all her clothes were on fire. He tore them burning from her: stripped her of her last rags and protecting her nakedness with his

coat, carried her from the fire. Fathers and mothers were deploring the loss of their children; children the loss of their parents. Husbands were heard to lament their lost companions. Wives were bemoaning their burnt husbands. The people were seen wringing their hands, beating their head and breasts, and those that had secured themselves, seemed to suffer greater torments than those who were enveloped in flames.

Oh distracting memory! Who, that saw this can think of it again, and yet retain his senses. Do I dream? No, No. Oh that it were but a dream. My God! Who that saw his friends and dearest connections devoured by fire, and laying in heaps at the doors, will not regret that he ever lived to see such a sight? Could savages have seen this memorable event, it would even soften their hearts.

A sad gloom pervades this place, and every countenance is cast down to the earth. The loss of an hundred thousand friends in the field of battle, could not touch the heart like this. Enough. Imagine what cannot be described. The most distant, and implacable enemy, and the most savage barbarians will condole our unhappy lot.

All of those who were in the pit escaped, and had cleared themselves from the house before those who were in the boxes could get down; and the door was for some time empty. Those from above were pushing each other down the steps, when the hindermost might have got out by leaping into the pit. A gentleman and lady, who otherwise would have perished, had their lives saved by being providentially thrown from the second boxes.—There would not have been the least difficulty in descending from the first boxes into the pit.

In addition to the list now given, it is believed that at least 60 others perished, whose names are not yet ascertained.

George W. Smith, governor, A. B. Venable, president of the bank, Benjamin Botts, Wife and Niece, Mrs. Tayloe Braxton, Mrs. Patterson, Mrs. Gallego, Miss Conyers, Lieut. J. Gibson, in attempting to save Miss Conyers, Mrs. E. Page, Miss Louisa Mayo, Mrs. William

Cook, Miss Elvina Coutts, Mrs. John Lesley, Miss M. Nelson, Miss Page, William Brown, Miss Julia Hervey, Miss Whitlock, George Dixon, A. Marshall, (of Wythe) broke his neck in attempting to jump from a window, Miss Ann Craig, Miss Stevenson, (of Spottsylvania) Mrs. Gibson, Miss Arianna Hunter, Mrs. Mary Davis, Miss Gerard, Thomas Lecroix, Jane Wade, Mrs. Pickit, Mrs. Heron, Mrs. Laforest, and Niece, Jos. Jacobs, Miss Jacobs, Miss A. Bausman, Miss M. Marks, Edward Wenton, jun. two Miss Trouins, Mrs. Gerer, Miss Ellicott, Miss Patsey Griffin, Mrs. Moss, and daughter, Miss Littlepage, Miss Rebecca Cook, Mrs. Girardin, and two children, Miss Margaret Copeland, Miss Gwathmey, Miss Clay, daughter of M. Clay, Member of Congress, Miss Gatewood, Mrs. Thomas Wilson, Wm. Southgate, Mrs. Robert Greenhow, Mr. Convert, and child, Miss Green, Miss C. Raphael. 61 *names.*

☞ At a meeting of the Commissioners appointed by the Common Hall to superintend the interment of the remains of their friends and fellow-citizens, who unfortunately lost their lives in the conflagration of the Theatre, the following resolutions were adopted .—

1st. That the citizens of Richmond and Manchester, and the citizens at present residing in either of those places, be requested to assemble to-morrow the 28th inst. at one o'clock, P. M. at the Baptist Meeting House, for the purpose of attending the funeral.

2d. That the following be the order of procession:

CORPSES.
CLERGY.
MOURNERS AND LADIES.
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.
DIRECTORS OF THE BANK.
JUDICIARY.
MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE.
COURT OF HUSTINGS.
COMMON HALL.
CITIZENS ON FOOT.
CITIZENS ON HORSEBACK.

JOHN ADAMS,
GAB. RALSTON,
WM. HAY, Jun.
JOHN G. GAMBLE.

As narrated by the Editor of the Richmond Enquirer, on Saturday, the 28th December, 1811.

OVERWHELMING CALAMITY.

In the whole course of our existence we have never taken our pen under a deeper gloom than we feel at this moment. It falls to our lot to record one of the most distressing scenes which can happen in the whole circle of human affairs. The reader must excuse the incoherence of the narrative; there is scarcely a dry eye in this distracted city. Weep, my fellow-citizens; for we have seen a night of wo, which scarce any eye had seen, or ear hath heard, and no tongue can adequately tell.

How can we describe the scene? No pen can paint it; no imagination can conceive it. A whole theatre wrapt in flames—a gay and animated assembly suddenly thrown on the very verge of the grave——many of them, oh! how many, precipitated in a moment into eternity—youth, and beauty, and old age and genius overwhelmed in one promiscuous ruin—Shrieks, groans, and human agony in every shape——this is the heart-rending scene that we are called upon to describe. We sink under the effort.—Reader! excuse our feelings, for they are the feelings of a whole city.

Let us collect our ideas as well as we can. On Thursday night a new play and a new after piece were played for the benefit of Mr. *Placide*. Crowds swarmed to the theatre—it was the fullest house this season—there were not less than 600 present. The play went off—the pantomime began— the first Act was over. The whole scene was before us—and all around us was mirth and festivity. Oh God! what a horrible revolution did one minute produce! The curtain rose on the 2d Act of the Pantomime —the orchestra was in chorus; and Mr. *West* came to open the scene—when sparks of the fire began to fall on the back of the stage, and Mr. *Robertson* came out in unutterable distress, waved his hand to the ceiling, and uttered these appalling words—" The house is on fire." His

hand was immediately stretched forth to the persons in the stage-box to help on the stage—and aid their retreat in that direction. This is all that we caught of the stage —the cry of *fire*, *fire*, passed with electric velocity through the house—every one flew from their seats to gain the lobbies and stairs.

The scene baffles all description.——The most heart-piercing cries pervaded the house. " Save me, save me." Wives asking for their husbands, females and children shrieking while the gathering element came rolling on its curling flames and columns of smoke—threatening to devour every human being in the building. Many were trod under foot— several were thrown back from the windows which they were struggling to leap. The stairways were immediately blocked up—the throng was so great that many were raised several feet over the heads of the rest—the smoke threatened an instant suffocation. We cannot dwell on this picture We saw—we felt it—like others, we gave up ourselves for lost—We cannot depict it. Many leaped from the windows of the first story, and were saved—children and females and men of all descriptions were seen to precipitate themselves on the ground below, most of these escaped; though several of them with broken legs, and thighs, and hideous contusions. Most, if not all who were in the pit escaped. Mr. *Taylor*, the last of the musicians who quitted the orchestra, finding his retreat by the back way cut off, leapt into the pit, whence he entered the semicircle avenue which leads to the door of the Theatre, and found it nearly empty. He was the last that escaped from the pit! how melancholy, that many who were in the boxes did not also jump into the pit and fly in the same direction. But those who were in the boxes, above and below, pushed for the lobbies—many, as has been said, escaped through the windows—but the most of them had no other resource than to descend the stairs; many escaped that way —but so great was the pressure that they retarded each other; until the devouring element approached to sweep them into eternity.—Several who even emerged from the

building were so much scorched that they have since perished—some even jumped from the second window—some others have been dreadfully burnt.

The fire flew with a rapidity, almost beyond example. Within 10 minutes after it caught, the whole house was wrapt in flames. The coloured people in the gallery, most of them escaped through the stairs cut off from the house —some have no doubt fallen victims. The pit and boxes had but one common avenue, through which the whole crowd escaped, save those only who leaped through the windows.

But the scene which ensued, it is impossible to paint. Women with dishevelled hair—fathers and mothers shrieking out for their children—husbands for their wives —brothers for their sisters—filled the whole area on the outside of the building. A few, who escaped, plunged again into the flames to save some dear object of their regard. The Governor perhaps shared this melancholy fate. Others were frantic and would have rushed to destruction, but for the hand of a friend. The bells tolled. Almost the whole town rushed to the fatal spot.

The flame *must* have caught to the scenery from some light behind—*Robertson* saw it, when it was no longer than his arm—*Young* saw it on the roof, when it first burst through. Every article of the theatre was consumed; as well as the dwelling house next to it.——But what is wealth in comparison to the many valuable lives which have gone forever? The whole town is shrouded in wo. Heads of families extinguished forever—many and many is the house in which a chasm has been made that can never be filled up.—We cannot dwell on this picture—we must drop the pen.——When we have time to collect a more particular account than is published, we shall give it hereafter. Oh miserable night of unutterable wo!!

As narrated in a letter to M. Clay, Esq, a Representative from Virginia, dated December 27, 1811.

I have a tale of horror to tell; prepare to hear of the most awful calamity that ever plunged a whole city into affliction. Yes, all Richmond is in tears: children have lost their parents, parents have lost their children. Yesterday a beloved daughter gladdened my heart with her innocent smiles; to-day she is in Heaven! God gave her to me, and God—yes, it has pleased Almighty God to take her from me. O! sir, feel for me, and not for me only; arm yourself with fortitude, whilst I discharge the mournful duty of telling you, that you have to feel also for yourself. Yes, for it must be told, you also were the father of an amiable daughter, now, like my beloved child, gone to join her mother in Heaven.

How can words represent what one night, one hour of unutterable horror, has done to overwhelm a hundred families with grief and despair. No, sir, impossible. My eyes beheld last night what no tongue, no pen can describe—horrors that language has no terms to represent.

Last night we were all at the theatre; every family in Richmond, or, at least, a very large proportion of them, was there—the house was uncommonly full—when, dreadful to relate, the scenery took fire, spread rapidly above, ascending in volumes of flame and smoke into the upper part of the building, whence a moment after it descended to force a passage through the pit and boxes. In two minutes the whole audience were enveloped in hot, scorching smoke and flame. The lights were all extinguished by the black and smothering vapour; cries, shrieks, confusion, and despair, succeeded.

O moment of inexpressible horror! Nothing I can say, can paint the awful, shocking, maddening scene. The images of both my dear children were before me, but I was removed by an impassable crowd from the dear sufferers. The youngest (with gratitude to Heaven I write it), sprang towards the voice of her papa,

reached my assisting hand, and was extricated from the overwhelming mass that soon choked the passage by the stairs: but no efforts could avail me to reach, or even gain sight of the other; and my dear, dear Margaret, and your sweet Mary, with her companions, Miss Gwathmey and Miss Gatewood, passed together and at once, into a happier world. Judge my feelings by your own, when I found neither they nor my beloved sister appeared upon the stairs. First one, and then another, and another, I helped down; hoping every moment to seize the hand of my dear child—but no, no, I was not destined to have that happiness. O to see so, *so* many amiable helpless females trying to stretch to me their imploring hands, crying, "save me, sir; oh, sir, save *me*, save *me!*" Oh God, eternity cannot banish that spectacle of horror from my recollection. Some friendly unknown hand dragged me from the scene of flames and death—and on gaining the open air, to my infinite consolation, I found my sister had thrown herself from the upper window and was saved—yes, thanks be to God, saved where fifty others, in a similar attempt, broke their necks, or were crushed to death by those who fell on them from the same height.

Oh, sir, you can have no idea of the general consternation—the universal grief that pervades this city—but why do I speak of that? I scarcely know what I write to you. Farewell. In haste and in deep affliction.

As narrated by the Editor of the Richmond Enquirer, on Tuesday, December 31st, 1811.

WE cannot paint the details of the scene on Thursday night—No description can do justice to its horrors—and there were so few persons so cool and self-collected as to accurately paint any part of the mass of woes which fell in a moment upon us. Some scenes are so fraught with horror, that a delicate pencil would have to skip

them—Besides, time enough has not been had to bring together an accurate group of woes.

It is painful to touch upon the catastrophe of those who have gone forever. Their ashes are in the grave—but their memories are entombed in our hearts.

The Generous and worthy Smith, who but a few days since was crowned with one of the highest honours which Virginia can bestow, is snatched from his country, his distracted family, his children and his friends!! It is not certainly known whether he had effected his escape from the building and rushed again into the flames to save his child!—There is a confusion in the story, and perhaps it is as well if it never were cleared up.

Abraham B. Venable, the President of the bank of Virginia; a man who has filled our public stations with very high repute; who has been in the House of Representatives and in the Senate of the United States during the most interesting periods—he too is gone! He has left no wife or children; but a long train of relatives and friends to weep his loss.—He was in the box with ladies; he begged them not to be precipitate or impatient; but was at length driven towards a window in the lobby, with a crowd of others. The suffocating smoke came rolling on. Mr. V. and some who were with him were thrown down. Mr. Noland fell towards the window and was saved. Mr. V. fell the other way and perished in the smoke!

Many doubtless perished in the same way. The volume of smoke, could not at first escape through the roof, was bent downwards, black, dense almost saturated with oily vapours. Many were suffocated by it, who might have had strength enough to leap the windows.—Several were saved by the fresh air which they inhaled at the windows—or even at a cranny.

Poor *Botts!* a man of astonishing attainments at the bar, has perished with his wife and her niece—he fell perhaps a victim to his hopes. He thought it more prudent to sit still with his wife, while the crowd passed by; but her sister-in-law *Mrs. Page*, yielding to the sympathetic impulse of her fears, rushed forward and is saved.

What a seal has death set upon his family! At one fell swoop, five helpless children are converted into Orphans.

How heavily has the hand of death fallen upon the *Harvies*! Poor mourners, deeply indeed have ye drunk of the cup of affliction. Within five short years ye had numbered among the dead, the venerable *John Harvie*, the distinguished *Lewis Harvie*, the amiable *Mrs. Mc Craw*, the interesting little boy, of *Dr. Brokenbrough*. But by one blow, the distressed mother, *Mrs. Harvie*, has lost her noble and high-souled daughter, *Juliana*, her excellent son *E. J. Harvie*, and that sweet little girl *Mary Whitlock*, her beloved Grand-daughter!!! Reader, conceive if you can, what you never, can have felt.

Lieut. James Gibbon, of the United States Navy, has gone with the rest! Young as he was, he had tasted of the cup of affliction. He was taken captive in the Philadelphia, and immured in the prisons of Tripoli.—On this fatal night, he and *Mr. John Lynch* were in the same box with *Mrs. Gallego*, *Miss Conyers*, *Mr. Venable* and others—when the alarm was first given, they endeavoured to quiet the apprehensions of the ladies, but when the front scene was in flames, they reached over for *Miss Conyers* who had sunk motionless below—they took her over; they held her between them in a state of insensibility, her head falling over *Mr. Lynch's* left arm. In this manner they proceeded towards the head of the stairs, when *Gibbon* said "*Lynch*, leave Sally to me, I am strong enough to carry her: she is light and you can save somebody else." Mr. L. replied, "God bless you *Gibbon*, there is the stair," and then turned round to seek some of the other ladies. Poor *Gibbon* and his lovely and interesting companion, sunk together.

We must drop this recital.—We have already stated the deaths of *Mrs. Gerardin* and her sweet boy—of *Mrs. Gibson*, whose husband is perhaps now on his way from Europe; what a blow upon his heart!—of the venerable *Mrs. Page*; and *Mrs. Lesslie*; of the lovely *Nancy Green*, the daughter of *Mr. Green*, the Manager; of the amiable *Mrs. Robert Greenhow*. The particulars of most

of their fates are wrapt in oblivion. Their ashes are in the grave.

These perished amid the flames—but *Mrs. Patterson* and *Mr. Wm. Brown* were overwhelmed by the crowd.

Let us change the scene.—It is a far more grateful task to describe the fate of those who have, as it were, miraculously escaped. It is some relief to our feeling, to contemplate those who seem again to have "re-visited the realms of light." It is almost as if the grave had given them up again from it jaws.—We are sorry, indeed, that our limits do not permit us to give any but hasty snatches and sketches of events.

Mr. John G. Jackson was overcome by the suffocating smoke and fell senseless. His last recollection was that his feet were descending: but whether the floor or stairway were broken or he had reached the descent, he was not conscious—but insensibly he descended to the level of the pit were a strong current of fresh air revived him, as he lay amongst a heap of prostrate persons. He struggled to rise and found himself on his feet with a lady clinging to him and beseeching him to save her. With difficulty he found the door, not being acquainted with the house, but at last he emerged with the lady, when the fire was pouring though the front windows, and ere they had advanced far, the roof tumbled in.

Mr. M. W. Hancock carried with him to the play, his niece, the two *Miss Herons* and three boys. When the alarm was given, he did all in his power to save his *proteges*—but was at last separated from them all. The flames were approaching with a degree of fury and rapidity that was perhaps never exceeded. Hitherto the scene had been all bustle, confusion and consternation; it now changed to one of awful horror and desperation that beggars all description. He attempted to reach the centre window in the lobby of the lower boxes. He at last succeeded in mounting on the heads of the crowd betwixt him and the window, and finally reached it, surrounded by the unavailing and afflicting cries of those suffocating around him. He stepped within the window

and with difficulty raised the lower sash—he thrust his feet out, when the sash was suddenly pressed down, and *caught* his feet betwixt it and the sill. He extricated one foot but could not the other, until those behind him who had sufficient strength left to mount over him and the lower sash which kept him down, did so. He found himself so far gone from suffocation that he gave himself up as lost—the flames however rushed over his head and the introduction of fresh air at the bottom of the window gave him new life. Those behind him being no longer able to keep him down, he with a last effort raised the sash, extricated his foot and jumped out.—It gives us sincere pleasure to add, that the three boys and girls whom he carried with him have all escaped with their lives.

Mr. John Lynch was the only person who passed the window after *Mr. Hancock*. After he had left poor Gibson, he met with a variety of horrid adventures. All was utter darkness in the Lobby, and suffocation threatened. It was an awful crisis—and but that one of the windows was burst open and let in fresh air, he thinks all in the Lobby must have perished. At length he reached the window, where he found a gentleman fixed fast, whom he since believes to have been *Mr. Hancock*. After an awful lapse, the flames were rushing on in all directions, his hair caught fire, hope deserted him; he was struck with horror at the idea of being burnt alive. He rushed towards the window, waving his hands as quick as possible over his head and clothes. This was a dreadful moment; he saw many drop down on each side of him suffocated —the window was now free, and he was scarcely on the bottom of it when he heard an awful crash behind him. He threw himself out and Providence preserved him.

Mr. Robert Greenhow precipitated himself down the stairs over fire-brands and bodies with his fine son in his arms—and was saved.

Mr. Head Lynch made a wonderful escape with his child. His lady was saved by a strong man's pulling her by the hair of the head over the bodies in the stair-way.

Mr. Stetson fell in the lobby with his head to the wall —but for a crack which his mouth accidentally caught, he would have died for want of air——the fresh air that streamed, through it revived him enough to lift his head to the window——a fresh draught of it revived him and he jumped out.

Mr. Gordon was saved in a state of insensibility. His Lady was saved by jumping through a window and clinging to a man, and her little daughter by hanging to her mantle. They had three children there, and not one of them was lost.

Several individuals were active in rescuing the lives of their fellow-creatures. *Dr. McCaw* let down several from the window—*Mr. Doyle*, *Mr. Grant* and others, who were out, received many as they were let down or jumped down.

A letter from Richmond, addressed to a gentleman in this city states, that the unclaimed remains of upwards of fifty of the unfortunate persons, who perished in the fire, were deposited in two large boxes, and buried in the *Pit of the Theatre*. The Citizens have purchased the lot of ground on which the Theatre stood, for the purpose of erecting a CHURCH in its place; and more than *two thousand dollars* have already been subscribed for that pious purpose. The writer adds, that among the number who so awfully perished, there were not six of the poorer class of people.

A letter addressed to Mr. Hewes, Editor of the Baltimore Federal Gazette, says, that "the number of persons lost is not yet ascertained, but supposed to be nearly two hundred, from the number of sculls taken out of the building."

Another letter contains the following occurrence:— One gentleman in the boxes escaped almost miraculously: He was sitting with two small girls and a boy, when the fire was discovered. The boy leaped from the window and escaped unhurt. The gentleman took the

two girls, one under each arm, resolved on exertions, and flew with them to the stair-case, jamming them between his breast and the people before him, striving to keep himself straight, but in vain ; the pressure from behind, and those leaping over head, overpowered him. He was bent down with the children in his arm ; and from that time he knew nothing of what passed till several hours afterwards, he came to his senses, and found himself in his own bed. He must have been wedged up so as to be forced along unconsciously by the mass, as he was picked up at some distance from the play-house. The children escaped with but little hurt. The wife of this gentleman, who was in another part of the house, saved herself by leaping out of a window, in company with a young lady, who perished in the attempt.

The lady who was rescued by the Editor of the Amemerican Standard, and whom he covered with his great coat, was *Miss Harvey ;* who died with her burns on Friday.

Richmond, December 31st, 1811.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE FIRE.

At about half past ten I met with a gentleman in the lobby, who like myself was not much interested with the Pantomime ; and after some desultory conversation we agreed to walk to his house, which is convenient to the Theatre ; we had not gone thirty perches, when we heard a confused noise ; on looking around, we perceived the Theatre, for the most part enveloped in flames ; he having a wife and son, (whom he lost) with many more relatives within, flew to their assistance. I observing a number of female acquaintances at the windows, took my stand under one, and was fortunate enough to rescue them all from destruction ; though the clothes of many of them were in flames. The last I rescued being a weighty lady, although frequ ntly called to particularly, fell on me unawares, while I held another lady in my

arms, the force so stunned me, that I lay some time insensible: I am glad to hear that neither of the ladies are much injured; after I arose, I looked up, but saw no person at the window; the flames had then burst through, and the shrieks and cries had ceased. I then, with what gentlemen I could meet with, who were not frantic from their losses, proceeded to help the helpless; some ladies of the first rank were found lying so discoloured by fire and smoke, as not to be known; deaf to the cries of the bereaved, we attended to, and carried off all who were unable to assist themselves, one of whom, Dr. M'Caw, after having saved the lives of numbers by throwing himself out of a window, has disabled himself. Our worthy governor too in a humane attempt lost his life. I will not undertake to name the many worthy characters who have perished in the flames, the progress of which was so rapid, and the ties between husband and wife, parent and child, sister and brothers, friend and friend so strong; that before any plan of salvation could be formed, all was lost; the time intervening between the first appearance of fire and the last person saved was not more than six minutes. Upon examining the neighbouring houses, it was dreadful to behold the half burned bodies of some of the first characters in Virginia, who now lie subject to medical treatment; but I know of none that are not thought to be recoverable. It is a mistake in "The American Standard," that Mrs. Picket is dead; it is also a mistake, that Mr. Girardin lost two children. God knows he lost enough, in losing an amiable wife, and a son on whom he doated. The number lost cannot yet be ascertained. A CITIZEN.

A letter from a friend of the Editor of the Petersburg Intelligencer, who had lost his venerable mother in the conflagration at Richmond, thus writes:

"Last night—last wretched night—our theatre was crouded beyond what the season had witnessed. In the midst of the performance, the scenery took fire, and with

the most inconceivable rapidity communicated to the whole interior of the building; and, G— ! what havock ensued ! Our houses are all hospitals; our streets lined with parents lamenting the loss of children—children shrieking for parents just perished--wives lamenting lost husbands, and husbands wives !--In short the picture of gloomy wo is heightened beyond any conception of fancy. Can you conceive our situation ?——I cannot describe it. Sixty or seventy persons, perhaps an hundred, *totally and literally consumed !*--and the number of those wounded is inconceivable.——In one wretched group, eight mothers of families, who were forced into a corner by the croud--their clothes on fire they clung franticly together; and thus embracing, were seen to sink into eternity ! ! ! --Can I add to the picture ?——It fades from my view, and leaves me almost unconscious of existence."

AN ORDINANCE,

Concerning the conflagration of the Theatre, in the city of Richmond.

(Passed at 11 o'clock, December 27th, 1811.)

Whereas, the fire which took place in the Theatre, on the 26th instant, has brought upon our city a calamity unknown in the annals of our country, from a similar cause, depriving society of many of its most esteemed and valuable members, and inflicting upon the survivors, pangs the most poignant and afflicting; and the Common Hall participating in those feelings, and being desirous of manifesting their respect for the remains which have been preserved from the conflagration, and to sooth and allay as much as in them lies, the grief of the friends and relations of the deceased:

Be it therefore ordained by the President and Common Council of the City of Richmond, in Common Hall assembled: And it is hereby ordained by the authority of the same; that Doctor Adams, Mr. W. Hay, Mr.

Ralston, and Mr. Gamble, be, and they are hereby authorised and empowered to cause to be collected and deposited in such urns, coffins, or other suitable inclosures, as they may approve, all the remains of persons, who have suffered, which shall not be claimed by the relatives, and cause the same to be removed to the public burying ground, with all proper respect and solemnity, giving to the citizens of Richmond and Town of Manchester, notice of the time of such interment, and providing the necessary refreshments; and they shall have further authority to cause to be erected over such remains, such tomb or tombs, as they may approve, with such inscriptions as to them may appear best calculated to record the melancholy and afflicting event.

And be it further ordained by the authority of the same, that the constable of this city, be authorised to communicate to the citizens, that it is earnestly recommended that they will abstain from all business, keeping their shops, stores, compting houses, and offices shut for forty-eight hours from the passing of this ordinance.

And be it further ordained, that no person or persons shall be permitted for and during the term of four months from the passage hereof, to exhibit any public show or spectacle, or open any public dancing assembly within this city, under the penalty of six dollars and sixty-six cents for every hour the same shall be exhibited.

The commissioners appointed by this ordinance, shall have authority to draw upon the chamberlain for the amount of any expense by them incurred in executing the same.

Copy. N. SHEPPARD, c. c. h.

At a very numerous meeting of the citizens of Richmond, Manchester, and others convened at the Capitol, on Friday, the 27th instant. The mayor of this city in the chair—the following preamble and resolutions were moved and unanimously adopted:

This city having been visited by a calamity the most distressing with which society can be afflicted, which has deprived us of many of our most valuable citizens, pervading every family and rendering our whole town one deep and gloomy scene of wo; the extent of which at this time cannot be accurately ascertained,

Resolved, Therefore, that three proper persons in each ward, be appointed to go round and procure the most accurate information of the names and numbers of such of our citizens and others, who have fallen a sacrifice by the burning of the theatre last evening; and that some persons in Manchester be requested to perform the same service in that town; and that they make report thereof to the Mayor.

And the following persons were appointed, viz. in Jefferson ward, William Bowlett, Joseph A. Myers, and Samuel Pleasants—in Madison ward, Jedediah Allen, Robert McKiln, and Robert Pollard—in Monroe ward, Thomas Taylor, Anderson Barrett, and Thomas Rutherford—and in Manchester, William Fenwick, Mr. Clark, and Mr. A. Freeland.

Resolved, That it be recommended to the citizens of Richmond, to observe Wednesday next, as a day of humiliation and prayer, in consequence of the late melancholy event, and to suspend on that day their usual occupations.

Resolved, That the committee appointed by the Common Hall, to collect the remains of the deceased, be also requested to regulate the time and order of the funeral procession.

Resolved, That the members of the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary branches be respectfully requested to attend this melancholy occasion.

Resolved, That the Reverend Mr. John Buchanan and Mr. Blair, be requested to prepare a funeral sermon for the occasion, to be delivered by one of them on Wednesday next in the Church on Richmond hill.

Resolved, That the citizens of Richmond be requested

to wear crape for one month in token of the deep sense universally entertained of this severe visitation.

Resolved, That the inhabitants of this city and town of Manchester, be respectfully requested, and such strangers as may wish to join in this melancholy occasion, be most cheerfully permitted to contribute towards the monument to be erected over the deceased, in aid of the public funds to be contributed by this corporation.

Resolved, That a committee consisting of the following gentlemen, viz. General John Marshall, Thomas Taylor, Joseph Marx, William Fenwick, and Benjamin Hatcher, be appointed to receive contributions, and to make such arrangements in concert with a committee from the Common Hall, as may be necessary for erecting the monument designated by an ordinance passed this day.

Resolved, That although this meeting have no reasons whatever to believe that this melancholy catastrophe has been produced by design, a committee consisting of Thomas Ritchie, William Marshall, and Samuel G. Adams, be appointed to enquire into its causes, for the purpose of submitting this statement for the information of the world.

And then the meeting adjourned.

BENJ. TATE, *Mayor*.

REPORT

OF THE COMMITTEE OF INVESTIGATION.

We the Committee, appointed by our Fellow-Citizens "to enquire into the causes of the melancholy catastrophe" which took place in this city on Thursday night last; a catastrophe, which has spread a gloom over a whole city, and filled every eye with tears; have given to this melancholy duty all the attention in our power.—We feel it due to ourselves; it was due to our weeping fellow-citizens; it was due to the world to collect all the lights which might serve to lucidate an event whose ef-

fects are so deeply written on our hearts.—We have seen every person who was behind the scenes, that was best able to assist our enquiries—we have heard their statements, and after sifting them as accurately as possible, beg leave to submit the following report to our afflicted citizens :

On the night of Thursday last, the Pantomime of " The Bleeding Nun, or, Agnes and Raymond" came on for representation after the Play was over. In the first Act, amongst other scenes, was the scene of the Cottage of Baptist the Robber, which was illuminated by a chandelier apparently hanging from the ceiling. When the curtain fell on the first Act, and before it rose on the Second, this chandelier was lifted from its position among the scenery above. It was fixed with 2 wicks to it ; one only of them had been lit ; yet when it was lifted above, *this fatal lamp was not extinguished.* Here the first link in the chain of our disasters. The man who raised it, does not pretend to deny it—but pleads that he did so in consequence of an order from some person, whom he supposed authorised to direct him. That person was behind him ; the voice had reached him, without his seeing the person, and he does not pretend positively to recognise him. We have not the most distant idea that there was the slightest mischievous intention in the order or in the act—it was inattention—it was the grossest negligence. The lifter of the lamps says that he was aware of the danger, and remonstrated against the act ; yet yielded with too fatal a facility to the reiterated orders of a person whom he saw not, but supposed authorized to direct him. We cast not the slightest imputations upon the Managers or any of the regular Comedians of the stage—their positions at the moment as well as other circumstances, forbid the idea, that the order ever passed their lips ; yet the act was done. The lighted lamp was lifted—the torch of destruction gleamed at the top of the stage.

Mr. Rice (the Property-man of the Theatre) says, that he saw the scene was over in which the lamp was used ; he saw the lamp after it was lifted up ; he was aware of

the danger of its remaining in that position ; and spoke to one of the carpenters, three times repeatedly, " Lowe that lamp and blow it out." He did not see it put out for he was drawn by his business to another part of the stage.

Mr. West declares he was passing by to commence the 2nd Act of the Pantomime, and saw the lamp up and heard Rice giving directions to the Carpenter to extinguish it.

Mr. Cook (the regular carpenter of the Theatre) declares that he saw the carpenter, alluded to above, attempting to let down the lamp immediately after the order to let it down had been given ; that he has no doubt this attempt was made in consequence of the order ; that he saw the cords tangle and the lamp to oscillate several inches from its perpendicular position. The chandelier above was moved by two cords which worked over two pulleys, inserted in a collar-beam of the roof ; and the straight line from the beam to the lamp was, Mr. Cook thinks, about 14 or 15 feet. Thus some idea may be had of the *degree* of oscillation.

Mr. Anderson (one of the performers of the Theatre) says, that he had remarked, even before the representation, how unskilfully the chandelier had played ; and that an attempt to move it had caused it to ride circularly round.

Mr. Yore (another of the workmen of the machinery,) most conclusively confirms this statement. He saw, that in the attempt to lower the lamp, as it was perched among the scenery, the carpenter had failed in his effort ; that he then jerked it and jostled it ; that it was thus swerved from its perpendicular attitude, and brought into contact with the lower part of one of the front scenes. The scene took fire ; the flame rose, and tapering *above it* to a point, must have reached the roof, which was elevated 6 or 7 feet only above the top of the scene.

We were assured, that there was not one *transparent* scene hanging ; that is, a scene coated with varnish and extremely combustible—that there was but one *paper*

cene hanging, which Mr. Utt the prompter declares, vas removed 6 or 8 feet behind the lamp. Thirty-five cenes were at that moment hanging, exclusive of the flies r narrow borders which represent the skies, roofs, &c. —and of these, 34 were canvass paintings; which, though ot extremely combustible on the painted side, are on the ther so well covered with the fibres of the hemp as to atch the flame.

Efforts were made to extinguish the flame. Mr. Cook, he carpenter, ascended into the carpenter's gallery; but n vain. He *did* succeed in letting down some of the cenes upon the floor, under an idea that this was the urest means of extinguishing the flame; but he could ot distinguish the cords of the scene, that was then on ire. The roof soon caught, and the scene of danger ompelled him to fly for his life.

The committee must now be under the necessity of rawing the attention of our fellow-citizens, to the events vhich took place in front of the curtain. Mr. West states, hat immediately on his entering the stage to go on with is part, he heard some bustle behind the scenes which he onceived to be a mere fracas—the cry of "fire" then aluted his ears, which gave him no serious apprehen- ions, as he knew that little accidents of this description ad often taken place; that he heard some voices exclaim don't be alarmed," which exclamation he repeated hrough a solicitude to prevent hurry and confusion— hat he had not at that moment seen any flakes of fire fall ehind the scene; but seeing them at length falling from he roof, he retired behind the scene and found the whole tage enveloped in flames; that he attempted to pull own some of the hanging pieces; when finding it una- ailing, he attempted to make good his own retreat.

Mr. *Robertson*, who was the only performer besides, hat came before the audience, assured the committee, hat at the moment when he first discovered the flame, t was no longer than his handkerchief; that he repaired mmediately to the stage, as near the orchestra as he could ome; "there he conveyed to the audience, not wishin

to alarm them, by gesticulation to leave the house—that in the act of doing that, he discovered the flames moving rapidly, and then he exclaimed, "the house (or Theatre) is on fire;" that he went directly to the stage-box where some 3 or 4 ladies were sitting, entreating them to jump into his arms—that he could save them by conveying them through the private stage-door—and that he still intreated, until he found it necessary to make his own escape—that his own retreat by the private door was intercepted by the flames—that he found it necessary to leap into the stage-box, and join the general crowd in the lobby—that he gained one of the front windows, assisted in passing out some 10 or 12 females, but at last found it necessary to throw himself from the window."

This narrative is due to the exertions of a gentleman, who first sounded the alarm—and to whom there are a few who have not done that justice which he deserves.—Let us now return to the transmission of the fire—where the point of flame reached the roof. The roof was unfortunately not plaistered and sealed—there was a sheathing of plank, pine plank we are told, nailed over the rafters; and over these, the shingles. The rosin of the pine had perhaps oozed out of the plank, though the heat of our summer's sun, stood in drops upon it. Yet however this may have been, no sooner did the spire of the flame reach the roof than it caught. The fire spread with a rapidity through this combustible material, unparalleled, certainly never equalled by any of the too numerous fires which have desolated our city. In 4 or 5 minutes at least, the whole roof was one sheet of flame—it burst through the bulls-eye in front—it sought the windows where the rarefied vapour sought its passage; fed by the vast column of air in the hollows of a Theatre, fed by the inflammable pannels and pillars of the boxes, by the done of the pit, by the canvass ceiling of the lower boxes, until its suffocated victims in the front were wrapt in its devouring flame or pressed to death under the smouldering ruins of the building.

Here might we pause in our melancholy task. We

have traced the conflagration to the fatal lamp, lifted as it was lit, then jirked and jostled, out of its perpendicular position to the scenery—to the roof; until every thing was enveloped in its fury. But there is one part of the subject which, though it does not fall strictly within the letter of the *Resolution*, or perhaps the line of our duty, is yet too interesting to be passed over. Why, *this fatality?* Why have *so many* victims perished on this melancholy occasion? It cannot be said, that it was the combustibility of the building and the rapidity of the fire, great as they undoubtedly were, which altogether produced this mortality of the species—for we cannot believe, if large vomitories had been erected for the passage of the crowd; if there had been doors enough to admit them, that more than *one-tenth* of an audience should have perished on the occasion.

It was in the opinion of the committee that this ill construction of the Theatre itself, was principally its cause. How numerous were the occasions on which it had long before been said, as the crowd was slowly retiring at the end of a play, "Suppose the house were on fire, what should we do?" Yet we slept with too fatal security over the evil—we trusted and we are ruined. New doors were not opened; the winding stair-case was not straitened; the access to the avenues of the Theatre was not enlarged.

Even the relics of our fellow-citizens as they lay, pointed out the causes of this fatality. They were found strewed in heaps at the foot of the narrow stair-case which led from the boxes—and though with less profusion, on the ground immediately *under* the lobby of the boxes above, from which lobby their retreat down the stairs had been intercepted by the crowd which choaked them up. On that fatal night, there were in the pit and boxes 518 dollar tickets and 80 children—exclusive of 50 persons who were in the galleries. Of these, 598 persons had to pass through one common avenue; and although all the people in the pit may have escaped, except a few who may have jumped into the boxes, yet the crowd in the lower and upper boxes, had

had no other resource than to press through a narrow angular stair-case, or to leap the windows. The committee, not being particularly conversant with the construction of theatres, have requested Mr. Twaits, one of the managers of this theatre, to furnish us with his ideas on the subject. He has favoured us with a statement, which we leg leave to incorporate with our report, in the words following, to wit:

"By the request of the committee of enquiry into the cause of the late dreadful calamity at the theatre on the night of the 26th instant, I assert, that the loss of so many valuable lives, and the distress which is felt by all on the occasion, is wholly attributable to the construction of the late theatre and its materials.

"In all Theatres, that I have seen, except the late one, there have been three distinct and separate doors of entrance—one to the boxes, one to the pit, and one to the gallery. The late Drury Lane Theatre had in the centre of each side a spacious hall, with broad and straight stair-cases, which terminated in the lobbies of the boxes; three entrances to the pit, one in the front and one on each side; and four entrances to two galleries, two on each side. These avenues were firm and commodious, and in their construction presented every facility for escape, when any danger assailed the audience. Miserable reverse! in the late Richmond Theatre, but one entrance to the boxes and pit, and that so narrow, that two persons could scarcely pass at the same time—the way then lying through a gloomy passage to a narrow winding stair-case, which terminated in as narrow a lobby.—It is, therefore, evident, that this ever to be lamented loss, which has at once deprived your city of some of its brightest ornaments, and desolated many families, is wholly attributable to the mal-construction of the late Theatre, which certainly offered no means of speedy escape. The rapidity of the conflagration must have been caused by the unfinished state of the building, there being no plaistered ceiling or wall to prevent the communication of flame."

The committee cannot close their melancholy labours without expressing one hope, that irreparable as our own calamities have been, we may not have suffered altogether in vain; that our own misfortunes may serve as beacons to the rest of our countrymen, and that no Theatres should be permitted to be opened in the other cities of the United States, until every facility has been procured for the escape of the audience.

THE committee appointed by the meeting of the citizens of Richmond this day, to ascertain the number of the unfortunate persons who perished by the burning of the Theatre on Thursday evening last, have according to order proceeded in the discharge of that melancholy duty, and lament exceedingly that they have discovered the loss greatly to exceed the number which was at first apprehended, and beg leave to submit the following list of those who are dead and missing as the most accurate which they have been enabled to discover.

A list of Sixty-three Dead and Missing.

Jefferson Ward.--Geo. W. Smith, Gov. Sophia Trouin, Cecilia Trouin, Joseph Jacobs, Elizabeth Jacobs, *his daughter*, Cyprian Marks, *wife of* Mordecai Marks, Charlotte Raphael, *daughter of* Solomon Raphael, Adeline Bausman, Ann Craig, *daughter of* Mrs. Adam Craig, —— Nuttal *a carpenter*, Pleasant *a mulatto woman belonging to* Mr. Wm. Rose, Nancy Patterson, *woman of colour supposed to have perished.*

Madison Ward.--Abraham B. Venable, *President of the Bank*, William Southgate, *son of Wright*, Benjamin Botts, and wife, Arianna Hunter, Mary Whitlock, Juliana Harvey, Mrs. Heron, Mrs. Girardin and child, Mrs. Robert Greenhow, Mrs. Moss, Barack Judah's child, Mrs. Lesslie, Edward Wanton, a youth, George Dixon, a youth, Wm. Brown, Mrs. Patterson, John Welch, a

stranger, Nephew to Sir A. Pigot, late from England, Margaret Copland, Margaret Anderson, Sally Gatewood, Mary Clay, Lucy Gawthmey, Louisa Mayo, Mrs. Gerard, Mrs. Gibson, Miss Green, Mary Davis, Thomas Frazier, a youth, Jane Wade a young women, Mrs. Wm. Cook and daughter, Elizabeth Stevenson, Mrs. Convert and child, Patsey Griffin, Fanny Goff, a woman of colour, Betsey Johnson, a woman of colour free, --Philadelphia, missing.

Monroe Ward. Mrs. Taylor Braxton, Mrs. Elizabeth Page, Mrs. Jerrod, James Waldon, Miss Elliot from N. Kent, Mrs. Gallego, Miss Conyers, Lieut. Jas. Gibbon, Mrs. Thomas Wilson, Miss Maria Nelson, Miss Mary Page, Mrs. Laforest.

☞ Besides these, *we* must add the name of Mr. Almerine Marshall, of Wythe county.

AN ORDINANCE,

To amend the ordinance, entitled "An Ordinance concerning the Conflagration of the Theatre, in the City of Richmond."

(Passed the 28th, Dec. 1811.)

WHEREAS, it is represented to the President & Common Council of the City of Richmond, in Common Hall assembled, that the remains of their unfortunate Fellow-Citizens who perished in the conflagration of the Theatre, on the night of the twenty-sixth inst. cannot with convenience, be removed from the spot on which they were found, & some of them were so far consumed as to fall to ashes—and that it would be more satisfactory to their relations that they should be interred on the spot where they perished, and that the site of the Theatre should be consecrated as the sacred deposit of their bones & ashes.

Be it therefore ordained by the authority aforesaid, That the Committee appointed by the ORDINANCE entitled An Ordinance concerning the conflagration of the

Theatre in the City of Richmond," instead of burying e remains of our Fellow-Citizens in the public burying ound, shall cause them to be interred within the Area, rmerly included in the walls of the Theatre: And the id Committee is hereby authorised and empowered to ırchase of the proprietors thereof, as soon as may be ssible, all the ground included within such walls.

And be it further ordained, That in addition to the duty ıposed upon that Committee by the before recited Or- nance, they be requested to inclose with a suitable wall of ick of the height of five feet at the least, the whole of e ground formerly covered by the said Theatre; and at the Common-Hall of the City of Richmond hold the nds of the City pledged to defray the expenses of pur- asing the said Area, and of the inclosure thereof, to be id out of any money in the hands of the Chamberlain, the time the said inclosure shall be erected by the said ɔmmittee, and to be paid by him to their draft or drafts. This Ordinance shall take effect from the passing there-

A Copy,

N. SHEPPARD, C. C. H.

INTERMENT OF THE DEAD.

The arrangements for this melancholy occasion could t be completed before Sunday—and as the place of in- ment had been changed from the Church to the area ıere the Theatre stood, to that fatal and devoted spot, e funeral procession did not move, as was originally con- nplated by the Committee, from the Baptist-Meeting- ɔuse, near the Theatre, where the relics lay, to the ıurch where the interment was intended to be made.

The mournful procession began at Mr. Edward Trent's, the main street, where the remains of the unfortunate rs. Patterson lay.—In front, the Corpse—then the ergy—Ladies in carriages—the Executive Council— rectors of the Bank—Members of the Legislature— e Court of Hustings—Common Hall—Citizens on foot

and on horseback.——Why paint the length and solen nity of the line? They moved up the main street unt they struck the cross street leading to the Bank—he they were joined by the Corpse of poor *Juliana Harvi* who expired at her brother-in-law's the Cashier of th Bank—They moved up the Capitol Hill, and at the C pitol were joined by the bearers of two large Mahogan boxes, in which were enclosed the ashes and relics of th deceased.—The mournful procession then moved to "th devoted spot;" and in the centre of the area where on stood the pit, these precious relics were buried in on common grave. The service for the dead was read b the Rev. Mr. Buchanan.—The whole scene defies d scription. A whole city bathed in tears!—How awf the transition on this devoted spot!—A few days sinc it was the theatre of joy and merriment—animated b the sound of music and the hum of a delighted multitud It is now a funeral pyre! the receptacle of the relics our friends!—and in a short time a monument will stan upon it to point out where their ashes lay!

REGISTER OF THE DEAD.

☞ In addition to the 63 persons who were publish in our last, from the Report of the Committee, we a pained to be compelled to subjoin the following additi nal list:—

Perished in the flames.

Miss Elvira Coutts,
Mrs. Pickit, *not wife of* Mr. G. P.
Miss Littlepage,
Jean Baptiste Rezi,
Thomas Lecroix,
Robert Ferrill, *a mulatto boy.*

Expired since.

On Saturday night, Mrs. John Bosher.

And at 11 o'clock on Sunday night, Edward Jam Harvie, Esq.—in consequence of the injury he receiv

his efforts to save his *unfortunate sister* from the ımes!!

☞ Not one life has been lost from Manchester. Irs. Hatcher has broken a limb.

RESOLUTIONS.

Adopted by the executive on Saturday, the 28th December, 1811.

Resolved unanimously, That in testimony of the pro- ɔund sorrow which, as individuals and members of this ɔdy, we feel for the loss of our much lamented friend ıd fellow-citizen, *George Wm. Smith*, late Governor of ıis Commonwealth, and which in common with the af- icted people of this City, we feel for the loss of those oth- r worthy and meritorious citizens, who fell a sacrifice ɔ the flames in the late conflagration of the Theatre; nd that, as a tribute, of the very high respect which we ntertain for *his* and *their* memory, we will, for the space f thirty days wear crape on our left arms.

Resolved also, That agreeable to an arrangement propo- ed by the Committee appointed by the Common-Hall f this City, to superintend the interment of such of the emains of the unfortunate sufferers as have been saved, ve will join the Funeral Procession.

Extract from the minutes.

Attest,

WM. ROBERTSON, *Clk. of the Council.*

To the Citizens of Richmond.

In the sincerity of afflicted minds, and deeply wound- :d hearts, permit us to express the anguish which we feel ‘or the late dreadful calamity, of which we cannot but :onsider ourselves the innocent cause. From a liberal ınd enlightened community, we fear no reproaches, but ‘we are conscious that many have too much cause to wish

they had never known us. To their mercy we appe for forgiveness, not for a crime committed, but for o which could not be prevented. Our own loss cannot estimated but by ourselves—'tis true (with one exce tion) we have not to lament the loss of life—but we ha lost our friends, our patrons, our property, and in pa our homes. Nor is this all our loss—In this miserab calamity, we find a sentence of banishment from yo hospitable city. No more do we expect to feel that glo ous pleasure which pervades a grateful heart, while receives favours liberally bestowed. Never again shall w behold that feminine humanity which so eagerly displaye itself to soothe the victim of disease, nor view with e ultation the benevolent who fostered the fatherless, a shed a ray of comfort on the departed soul of a dyi mother. Here then we cease—eloquence of Grief Silence.

James Rose, *William Anderson.*
Hopkins Robertson, *Thomas Burke.*
Chas. Young, *A. Placide*,
Charles Durang, *J. W. Green*,
William Twaits, *Wm. Clark.*

The committee of arrangement appointed by the Com mon-Hall of this city, believing that no one place of wo ship will be found large enough to accommodate all thos who may choose to unite in devotion on Wednesday nex take the liberty to recommend that Divine Service b performed at all the places of public worship at eleve o'clock on the before-mentioned day.

Dec. 30. 1811.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

BEING

THE CONCLUSION.

From the Richmond Enquirer of January 2.

THERE are some of the unfortunate victims of Thursday night, whose particular fates we have in vain attempted to penetrate.—We have taken uncommon pains to collect an authentic narrative of the events of this disastrous night; we have requested the aid of every person whom *we had heard* was capable of furnishing any information, and to whom the subject was not too tender to be mentioned; yet it is with some pain we have failed in our efforts. We should be sorry even to wear the most distant appearance of neglecting the fate or the memory of any one who perished in that deplorable night—but this appearance at least is inevitable. There were few persons so cool and collected as to be able to illustrate the horrors of that night; several who were able to point out the particular threads in the disastrous web of destiny, are no doubt unknown to us; and some who have promised to reduce their narratives to paper, have been prevented from doing so by their engagements or their feelings. The following are the only statements which we have received. They are enough, however, to communicate a feint idea of the collective horror of the scene; what a group would have breathed upon the canvas, if a few feint strokes of the pencil are so affecting! If such were the feelings of a few individuals, what must have been the situation of 500 people?—How impotent is the pencil of Raphael in the Vatican, where he attempts to paint the conflagration of Rome!

We should still proceed in our researches—but the reader has contemplated horrors enough. It is time to leave the paths of death. We have dwelt long enough upon this me-

lancholy theme; and we are anxious to relieve our columns from the sombre sable of wo. With this paper, therefore, let us cease the strains of grief: let us drop the subject. There is only another point of view in which we yet propose to consider it; but this is not directly calculated to harrow up the feelings of such as have lost their friends. Let us open the pages of history, and see whether this is the only city, which has been afflicted by so severe a visitation—whether this is the only people, whom "the paths of *pleasure* have led to the grave!"

We have learnt nothing very particularly authentic of the fate of Mrs. Thomas Wilson—we have merely heard, that with the cool and deliberate resolution of a strong mind, she remained for a time in her first position, fearing rather the consequences of precipitation and tumult, than the rapidity of the flames. They indeed baffled all reasonable calculation, and too many have fallen victims to this fatal mistake! Mrs. Wilson perished—one of the best of wives, the best of mothers, the most exemplary step-mother that ever lived! Words cannot express the agony of her distressed family—the deep dejection of all her friends.

The fate of Mrs. Heron is also wrapt in oblivion. She had been unfortunate enough to lose her husband by a disastrous accident—and her children have now lost their mother by one still more rapid and resistless. She was eminently true to all the domestic charities of life. But neither the hand of affection, of friendship, nor respect could snatch her from the tomb.

Mrs. Cook, the lamented wife of Mr. William Cook, and her daughter Rebecca, perished together. Long shall the disconsolate husband and father, weep over their ashes. Three motherless children are left behind her.

But why spread before the reader, all the havock of the scene?—The young have sunk as well as the married: the interesting Margaret Copland, the third daughter of Mr. Charles Copland; Patty Griffin, the only child of her aged mother; Miss Nelson, Miss Page, Miss Craig, all of them dear to their families and friends; William Southgate, the only prop of the family of Wright Southgate, deceased.—each has his merits; each has the public tear.

What a scene was exhibited for several hours after the tragic event! Many were ignorant of the fate of their friends;

Almost every one had his fears and suspicions. During the next day, two persons could scarcely meet without exchanging expressions of solicitude ;—" Have you lost any of your family ;"—" Is your family safe ?" " I am glad of it, I am glad of it."

Many escaped with extreme difficulty. Several have broken a limb. Mr. John Richards has broken a leg ; Mr. Carter Page has broken his. Miss Pendleton has also broken a limb. Mrs. Scott, of Fairfax, is much burnt. Some were severely burnt, whose clothes were whole.

We trust that the number of the dead is now exhausted. We give it entire in this paper. We had understood that some strangers had arrived at particular taverns, whose names were unknown—and these were said to be missing. We have enquired, and are happy to find it a mistake.

STATEMENTS.

I occupied on Thursday evening a seat in the lower corner box on the left of the entrance into the Theatre. The first I saw of the fire a piece of paper in full blaze was descending from the top and was then about fifteen feet above the level of the Stage, ere it alighted, a general cry of " fire" pervaded the house ; and the persons immediately quitted their seats. I was among the last to do so, and when I got half the distance to the stair-way, I met with Mrs. Scott, a lady of my acquaintance who I entreated to be calm, and not too precipitate ; as her safety depended upon deliberation ; her answer was " I am not alarmed and will do so;" we advanced a few feet and a loud cry that it was a " false alarm" induced me to return to the corner where I had sat, and looked through a door then open, and there I discovered the scenery in full blaze and the canopy on fire. I hastened back to the crowd. Being a stranger at the Theatre and ignorant of its construction, I knew no mode of escape except through the avenue I had ascended to the boxes.—I found it blockaded up by the crowd, and the light being very vivid, I discovered that the persons in it were principally Ladies ; they were greatly alarmed and crying for relief, and entreating the crowd not to destroy them ; still persisting in the belief that as the fire was in the rear, the danger was not very imminent ; unwilling to crowd on those before me, and being too lame to encounter

the struggle, I refrained from pressing upon them, but in a minute I found my hopes were illusive—a black thick smoke rushed upon us, so instantaneously suffocating, that those who had yielded to their fears by crying, sunk without a groan, and I found a space in front no longer crowded except by prostrate bodies. I advanced until the external light ascertained to me that I was opposite a window near the head of the stairs; this I endeavoured to force, but the bodies of some persons standing in that direction stopt me two feet short of it. In the efforts made after the smoke reached me I must have consumed in half a minute. I then was compelled to breath this oppressive smoke, which was so intolerable that I could only make one convulsive struggle to advance, and I then sunk senseless.—My last recollection was that my feet were descending; but whether the floor or stairway were broken, or I had reached the descent, I am not conscious, I heard no noise. Insensibly I descended to the level of the pit and there a strong current of fresh air revived me, as I lay amongst a heap of prostrate persons. I struggled to rise and found myself on my feet with a lady clinging to me, she entreated me to save her, and as she was unable to support herself, I carried her in various directions to find the outer door, which I avoided from a mistake that had almost proved fatal. I saw several persons falling from the windows into the street in full blaze, and my impression was that becoming desperate by the fire, they were plunging from the boxes into the pit, the place of all others most to be avoided; in this effort to find the way out I saw several gentlemen running to and fro, to whom I addressed the enquiry "which is the way out?" but obtained no answer. I at length determined to find the avenue through which the great column of air entered; and by running towards it, soon gained the door. When we got out, the fire was pouring through the front windows, and ere we had advanced far the roof tumbled in. The lady whom I rescued still claimed my assistance, and I carried her to a place of safety—I saw no more of the scene until the walls tumbled down, and do not know of any, or how many got out after we did, but I am confident that if those from without had ran in, many who fell by the suffocation and were burned before they regained strength to rise, would have been saved.

December 30, 1811. J. G. JACKSON.

SIR,—Agreeably to your request, I proceed to state the circumstances attending my situation and escape from the Theatre on the awful night of the 26th inst. I carried with me to the play, my niece and the two Miss Herons, Alfred Gilliat, Peter Kirby, and Nicholas Gilliam, nephew to my wife and self, the House was much crowded: for the girls, I with difficulty procured seats among some of their friends, mostly ladies, in box No. 8, and for the boys, seats in the back box No. 7—and was sitting when the curtain rose in the second act of the Afterpiece, next the boys, immediately after which the alarm of fire was given, and instantly I saw the fire falling on the stage. On rising from my seat, I desired the boys to take care of themselves and escape as soon as possible, and proceeded myself towards the seats in the next box, which were occupied by my niece, the Miss Herons and their party, with the intention of assisting them out of the House. I reached the place without much difficulty, but the party had all left their seats, and in endeavouring to return through the lobby I was carried with the current of the crowd opposite to the place from whence I had departed, and found that Mrs. Gibbon, Mrs. Gallego, Miss Conyers and the three Boys had all left their seats—In the then state of affairs it was evidently fruitless for me to search for either of the persons of whom I had been in pursuit, and at this juncture I began to think of myself for the first time.—I was in the lobby next to box No. 7, and the flames were approaching with a degree of fury and rapidity that perhaps was never exceeded—hitherto the scene had been all bustle, confusion and consternation; it now changed to one of awful horror and desperation that beggars all description,—all ceremony was forgotten in conforming to the first law of nature—I perceived the centre window in the front end of the House and determined to endeavour to reach it—with the assistance of a sword-cane which I had in my hand, and the partition betwixt the lobby and the box No. 7, I mounted on the heads of the crowd betwixt me and the window—by this time the House was in total darkness from smoke, but in groping, I providentially reached the side of the window, surrounded by the unavailing and afflicting cries of those suffocating around me. I stepped within the window, and with difficulty raised the lower sash with the intention of slipping out, and had thrust my feet through for that purpose, when the sash was suddenly pressed down on [illegible]

feet betwixt it and the window sill. I extricated one foot but could not extricate the other, until those behind me who had sufficient strength left to mount over me and the lower sash which kept me down, did so: in this situation I found myself so far gone from suffocation, that I gave myself up as lost, the flames however rushed over my head, and the introduction of fresh air at the bottom of the window, gave me new life,—those behind me being no longer able to keep me down, I with a last effort raised the window, extricated my foot and jumped out, without receiving any injury from the fall, though much injured in one of my feet from bruises occasioned by the pressure of the window sash, and I have other wounds and bruises received in the lobby and window, so slight however, as under other considerations not to be worth naming. Mr. John Lynch, merchant of this city, was I believe the only person who past through the window after me. I left many others about it, all of whom must have perished —so rapid was the fire that I do not think three minutes could have elapsed from the first alarm until I reached the window: at any rate, with all the exertion that I could make, about thirty feet would I think include the whole space of my progress from the first alarm until I reached the window, and at that time many were expiring with suffocation—In the midst of so much sorrow and grief, it affords me much consolation that the three Boys and Girls whom I carried with me, have all escaped with their lives, although the efforts which I made, with the view of assisting them, were unavailing. The scene which ensued out of the house, was witnessed by many, and like that within, will long be remembered, but probably never adequately described.

I am respectfully, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
M. W. HANCOCK.

Sir,—In consequence of the conversation we had this evening, I take up my pen, and without further preface, state, that when the commencement of the dreadful fire, of Thursday night was announced from the stage, I was leaning over the back of the front box, which was the next to the north side of the Theatre: on my left hand was Lieut. Gibbon, and on the bench directly below was Mrs. Gallego, Miss Conyers, Mrs.

Gibbon, Mrs. Braxton, Mr. Venable and others, whose names I cannot recollect: the alarm of fire was immediately succeeded by a cry of, 'tis a false alarm, there is no danger, and as we did not imagine any, both Lieut. Gibbon and myself, endeavoured to quiet the apprehensions of the ladies in the box. I fixed my eyes on the stage; the scene, which was down, had the appearance of a transparency, behind which gleams of light seemed to descend; but this did not convince me, nor any person near me; a moment, however, decided, the front scene was in flames, and I then resolved to give all that assistance which humanity dictated, and reached over for Miss Conyers, who had sunk motionless below. Lieut. Gibbon did the same; we took her over, we held her between us, she was in a state of insensibility, and to all appearance dead, her head falling over my left arm: in this manner we proceeded towards the head of the stairs, when Gibbon said, "Lynch, leave Sally to me, I am strong enough to carry her, she is light, and you can save somebody else. I replied, God bless you Gibbon, there is the stairs. I then turned round and proceeded for my original situation, in order to take out some of the other ladies, and as I returned, I perceived the dreadful element rush with the rapidity of lightning from the stage, along the facing of the upper boxes, taking both sides at the same time, and from the dreadful column of smoke which was then thrown down upon the centre of the front boxes, the flames must have met there: all was now utter darkness in the lobby, and suffocation threatened. I could not do any thing, I was in the midst of a crowd of sufferers, the cries were dreadful, it was an awful period, and only that the end window was then burst open, we must all, all that were in that lobby, would certainly have been suffocated; the opening of the window brought relief and hope. I moved on with the throng to the window, and got to the west side of it. There was a gentleman in a light coloured coat, fixed fast in the window seat, (whom I since understand was Mr. Hancock); it appeared to me that his legs and thighs were fixed between the sill of the window and the brick work: men and women were precipitating themselves on his shoulders, regardless of his entreaties to allow him to free himself, and of the fate that waited them below: many bodies were laying on the ground to appearance dead, and the flames were passing out of the top of the window; I was un-

determined, and at that moment I was pushed away towards the west wall of the theatre, again suffocation threatened, the flames were rushing on in all directions, my hair caught fire, (for my hat was gone); hope deserted me. I was struck with horror at the idea of being burnt alive; I rushed towards the window, waving my hands as quick as possible over my head and clothes: this was a dreadful moment—I saw many drop down on each side of me suffocated, and I passed over some bodies on my way: the window was now free, and I was scarcely on the bottom of it, when I heard an awful crash behind me. I threw myself out, and Providence preserved me. I am, with heartfelt feelings of congratulation on your own providential escape,

Very respectfully, Sir, your most obedient.

Richmond, 29th December, 1811. JOHN LYNCH.

Dear Sir,—Being told, that for the purpose of collecting the best information concerning all the circumstances attending the late dreadful conflagration, you were desirous of obtaining from each individual who had escaped, a short account of the manner and circumstances under which such escape was effected; I send you the following statement:

As the curtain rose for the commencement of the second act of the pantomime, I was standing in the lobby on the lower range of boxes, conversing with some of my friends through the broken pannel of a box about thirty feet from the head of the stairs. This box was entirely filled; among others who were in it, and who have perished, I remember Mrs. Gallego, Miss Conyers, Lieut. Gibbon, and Mr. Venable.—Immediately after the rising of the curtain, and as the scene commenced, I saw several flakes of fire fall about the centre of the stage; but supposed it was probably the falling of some ornament or lights intended to illuminate the scene. The cry of "fire!" was instantly given. I advanced a few steps into the lobby inquiring from whence the alarm arose, and met several persons, some of them known to me, calling out that it was a false alarm. I turned about, and now saw the curtain dropped, and a very large bright light behind it—I then felt assured that the house was on fire in that quarter. The consternation and confusion had become general. I felt no fear whatever from the flames, and was only apprehensive

that by the impetuosity of the crowd, many would be crushed to death, and with others united in calling out to those around me, that the danger was magnified, and beseeched them not to press so fast on those before—we called to the winds—I endeavoured to force my way back to the side of the box I had left, to calm the fears of those with whom I had been speaking, and to wait until the crowd had passed. This however was impossible. The column of the crowd in which I was enclosed, bore me irresistibly, but slowly along towards the stairs. Still feeling no fears of being overtaken by the flames, I continued folded in my cloak, and pressing my weight backwards, to give as far as possible an opportunity to those on the head of the stairs (where the pressure already seemed dreadful) to effect their escape. Suddenly I perceived a thick, black, hot smoke, curling down on our heads; persons were no longer to be distinguished; utter darkness prevailed; suffocation was fast approaching; for the first moment I was seriously alarmed, and by the most violent exertions endeavoured to make my way to the head of the stairs; it appeared to me I could not gain an inch. Those around me were sinking; my own strength failed, and I verily believed that I never should see the light again; at this instant a window on my right was forced open; the fresh air somewhat dissipated the smoke and revived us to new exertion; a universal scream of mingled joy and despair was given, and a rush towards the windows; those next it seemed unable to move, and cried out, "that they were pressed to death." I was within a few paces of it; and by desperate exertions endeavoured to reach it; I could not; in a last effort of despair assisting myself by the shoulder of some one next me, I drew my feet up and was thrown by the united impulse of others, and my own exertions, with my feet directly on the window sill, at the same instant fortunately seizing a broken fragment of the sash, I passed my head under it and reached the ground without material injury—I left many behind me.

THOMSON F. MASON.

Monday morning.

SIR—My friend Mr. Thomas Nelson, has informed me, that you wished me to state the particulars of my providential escape from the dreadful fire which consumed the Theatre on Thursday night last. They are as follows;—The late

period at which I arrived at the play house, compelled me t
ascend to the second row of boxes, to secure a seat for Mrs
Pendleton and myself, where we remained until I discovere
the second spark of fire fall on the Stage in front of the cur
tain, wh n I immediately heard the cry of fire from behind—
I then left my seat, and proceeded along the gangway, tc
wards the head of the stair-case, entreating the affrighted fe
males to have patience, and not precipitate themselves into th
immense crowd that was pressing forward, lest we should b
trampled to death, believing, that by waiting a few minute
we should have more room, and consequently descend wit
more expedition and safety.

In a few seconds, however, I was convinced by the effe
of an indescribable current of steam on my flesh, and smol
on my lungs, that I had miscalculated, and that our escap
must be instantaneous or not at all, as suffocation threatene
With an energy, which nothing but such a dreadful cris
could inspire, I rushed forward, retaining my wife's arm
locked in mine, until I attained the first turn in the stair-ca
just below, or perhaps nearly opposite the window, next t
front corner, on the lower, or side next the meeting hous
At this place, the crowd behind, trod on the tail of my lar
loose great coat, completely stopped my progress, and h
well nigh thrown me backwards, which nothing but an exe
tion I did not think myself capable of making, prevented.
this situation, my wife (great God, sir, figure, to yourself r
agony!) was torn from me by the resistless force of the crow
and just at the instant of our separation, numbers were tra
pled down,—and I did verily believe, that she was one of the
unfortunate victims. I thought I had then lost the obj
which had thus far stimulated my exertions, and remain
perfectly motionless for some seconds, having fixed myself
the corner of the brick wall to prevent being forced down, a
reflected on the impossibility of extricating myself from
impending destruction, by following the prodigious cro
t hat was then wedging me in my fortunate corner.

While these reflections were crossing my mind, I he
the window forced open just above me, and felt the reviv
influence of the delicious air which rushed upon me, and
vigorated the efforts which then saved my life. By exerti
which I now consider as supernatural, I reached the wind
which at that auspicious moment I enjoyed undisputed p

ssion of, and after looking down to ascertain where I might ight with least injury to myself as well as to others, who ad preceded me, I seated myself on the window sill, and ised myself off very deliberately and gradually, reflecting at ie same time, that if I could contrive my clothes to touch ie wall as I descended, the force of my passage down would e somewhat broken, I soon experienced the happy reality this experiment, for I landed on my feet, perfectly erect, nd have never since felt the lest soreness or inconvenience om my manner of escape. Thus, sir, I have in a hasty man-er complied with the request to the best of my recollection. will not attempt to describe to you my sensations for some ne after I had escaped, for although miraculously preserv-I myself, from what I had seen before I got out of the house, nd what I saw afterwards, I was agonized with a conviction at a beloved wife and a child had perished. You who are a usband and a Parent, must if possible, finish the picture.

I am, sir, Your most obedient,

EDMUND PENDLETON, junr.

Dear Sir,

What I know concerning that destructive fire from actual observa-on, is, although limited, very correct, having, had no particular re-tive to protect; every object of distress, that came within my obser-nce from the beginning to the end is as clearly before my mind's e now as it was at the unfortunate crisis.

I told you, that Mr. G. and myself were walking up the hill, not more an twenty or thirty perches from the theatre when the first flash peared—he ran frantic to the protection of his wife and child. I olly and deliberately to that of all within my power—the first I be-ld in distress riveted my whole attention—at the N. W. window, the front of the theatre, a number of ladies appeared most of whose es I knew—I called to them to jump out, they did, and were all ved—even from a broken bone, yet some much injured by the mes—Mrs. M'Rea and Mrs. Pickett were undoubtedly the two last o escaped from the ruins—Mr. Richard's family with many more d been received before undamaged—although frequently knocked wn. I received *all the ladies* from that window and no man ever as-ted one of them. If it were necessary I could be particular in Mrs. ckett's case—as she suffered more from unfeeling men than any la-I saw—as soon as she was safe, I ran round the building to see if y body else could be saved—I saw that all within were lost, my at-ation was next drawn to the door, near which I had stood from the ginning; there the blackened and lifeless bodies of many who are w in a fair way of recovery were trodden down by a gaping multi-de—I, with the assistance of a few whom I do not recollect, drag-

ged out many apparently dead—among whom were Miss Davis and Mr. Tiffin and the unfortunate Miss Harvie, these were all the bodies I recognized, the last of whom appeared most likely to live; for she could speak; but the others, although not much damaged externally, were apparently lifeless.

The most pleasing part of my life, was that which I spent in the act of preservation, but the most melancholy in assisting the preserved and seeking the lost—you saw part of that yourself.

Your friend and Servant, D. DOYLE.

Sir,—In compliance with your request, I send you a brief statement of the little to which I was an eye witness, in the late disastrous fire at the Theatre. I was at the head of the brick-row, on my way from the play-house when I heard the first cry of fire—without any other delay than was occasioned by aiding in drawing the Fire Engine about 10 or 15 yards, I hastened to the Theatre door. Mr. Allen Taylor had just come out, and Mrs. Gibbon was standing still, immediately within, apparently in a state of stupefaction. I drew her through the door and proceeded on to the partition-door where the checks were received—between these doors I met several men and women making their way out—In proceeding on the foot of the stairs, I saw no person of any description—but *along the stairs* from the first landing place lay a number of women on their faces, side by side, their heads towards the floor. They were all apparently lifeless—their clothes disordered and some of them naked from the waist.

My first impulse was to take up one of the smallest—In carrying her to the outer-door I met no person—but two men there receved her. Three or four gentlemen who I presume had been before employed in taking out the females, afterwards came in, and lost no time in removing the other ladies. They were all carried as far as the door, and there they were received and borne off by others. I think that Mr. John G. Smith and Mr. Alexander Sharp of this town were two of those who were in the house when I was, and were very active. I distinctly recollect what I saw when I first went in, but the horror of the spectacle which presented itself to my eyes at the foot of the stairs, (unapprized, and was until then that I had not met the last of the audience,) makes my recollection very indistinct of what passed afterwards. I am however confident that all those who had reached the lower flight of the stairs were rescued from the flames, and I flatter myself that they are now living. Mr. Smith and Mr. Sharp, and probably one or two others can vouch for the same fact.

Yours, &c. G. TUCKER.

☞ Yesterday *was* 'a day of humiliation and prayer." All the shops and stores were shut. The Rev. Mr. Blair preached at the church, a funeral sermon. Every place of public worship was opened. Mr. Speece preached at the Capitol in the morning, and Mr. Logan in the evening.—Mr. Bryce and Mr. Gregg at the Baptist meeting house in the morning. Mr. Courtney at the new Methodist Church in the morning—and at the old one, Mr. Bollieu in the morning, and Mr. Moore in the evening. Every place was filled to overflowing.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Dec. 2003

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111